

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-15 TRSE-00 SSM-05 IO-14 ACDA-10 MCT-01 OMB-01
DHA-05 COME-00 EUR-12 /116 W
-----086754 271255Z /40

R 271130Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7982
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION SINAI

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, IS, PLO
SUBJECT: KNESSET TO HOLD A POLITICAL DEBATE ON THE PLO

1. SUMMARY: THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT FAILED THIS WEEK TO GET OPPOSITION PARTIES TO SUPPORT A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING A CONSENSUS AGAINST TALKS WITH THE PLO. THE OPPOSITION WANTED TO HAVE NOT JUST A NEGATIVE STATEMENT BUT A POSITIVE EXPRESSION OF POLICY. THE ISSUE WILL BE DISCUSSED AGAIN NEXT WEEK AT A SPECIAL KNESSET SESSION AFTER BEGIN RETURNS FROM ROMANIA. END SUMMARY.

2. AT THE REQUEST OF THE GOVERNMENT THE KNESSET WILL HOLD A SPECIAL SESSION ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1977 TO DEBATE GOI'S FOREIGN POLICY. (THE KNESSET IS RECESSED UNTIL AFTER THE HIGH HOLY DAYS; SPECIAL SESSIONS CAN BE CONVENED AT THE REQUEST OF THE GOVERNMENT OR ANY 30 MEMBERS. THE DEBATE WILL OPEN WITH A STATEMENT BY FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN
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WHO WILL SET OUT THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY AND TABLE A RESOLUTION. THE MAIN OPPOSITION PARTIES, ALIGNMENT AND DMC, ARE HOLDING CONTACTS TO COORDINATE THEIR POSITIONS AND TO DRAW UP A JOINT DRAFT RESOLUTION.

3. THE DECISION TO REQUEST A SPECIAL KNESSET SESSION WAS REACHED AFTER THE PRIME MINISTER FAILED IN HIS EFFORTS

TO OBTAIN THE OPPOSITION'S SUPPORT DURING ANOTHER SPECIAL SESSION AUGUST 24 TO BACK A GOVERNMENT MOTION OPPOSING ANY DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO. THE ALIGNMENT AND THE DMC REFUSED TO SUPPORT BEGIN'S MOTION THEN BECAUSE "IT DEALT WITH ONLY ONE ASPECT OF ISRAEL'S FOREIGN POLICY" AND DID NOT STRESS ANY POSITIVE ASPECTS OF ISRAEL'S POLICY. THE PRIME MINISTER RETALIATED BY PRODUCING A KNESSET RESOLUTION DATED NOVEMBER 10, 1975, WHICH ALSO OPPOSED ANY NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PLO "IN ANY FORM". ALIGNMENT CIRCLES REPLIED THAT THE 1975 RESOLUTION WAS ONE OF A SERIES OF RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY THE KNESSET IN THE WAKE OF RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT THE U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT THE TIME, AND WHICH INCLUDED A STRONG ATTACK AGAINST ZIONISM.

4. IN THE DEBATE SLATED FOR SEPTEMBER 1, IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN'S MAIN THEME WILL BE ISRAEL'S POSITION ON THE PLO. WE HAVE LEARNED THAT NRP LEADERS ARE MAKING EFFORTS TO BRIDGE THE GAPS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT POSITION AND THE ALIGNMENT AND DMC. ONE NRP PROPOSAL CALLS FOR THE KNESSET TO TAKE A SEPARATE VOTE ON EACH PARAGRAPH OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS AT THE END OF THE POLITICAL DEBATE. THIS WOULD ENABLE THE PARTIES TO VOTE FOR ANY PARAGRAPH OPPOSING ANY CONTACTS OR NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PLO, WHILE ON THE OTHER PARAGRAPHS EACH PARTY COULD VOTE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR POLITICAL UNCLASSIFIED

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PLATFORMS. THUS, FOR EXAMPLE, THE ALIGNMENT AND THE DMC COULD VOTE FOR THEIR PROPOSALS TO SOLVE THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IN THE JORDANIAN CONTEXT, AND EXPRESS READINESS FOR TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE. THESE MOVES ARE STILL IN THEIR EARLY STAGES AND WILL BE COMPLETED AFTER BEGIN'S RETURN FROM BUCHAREST.

5. COMMENT AND REACTION: BEGIN'S ATTEMPT TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THE NATIONAL CONSENSUS AGAINST DEALING WITH THE PLO IS REFLECTED IN THE KNESSET FAILED BECAUSE THE OPPOSITION PARTIES FELT THAT WERE BEING USED FOR BEGIN'S POLITICAL PURPOSES. WHILE SOME OF THE OPPOSITION MEMBERS OPPOSED THE GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION SIMPLY FOR THE SAKE OF OPPOSITION, A NUMBER OF THEM HAD SUBSTANTIVE OBJECTIONS AS WELL: THEY FELT IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO SAY NO TO THE PLO BUT ISRAEL SHOULD EXPLAIN ITS POSITION IN A POSITIVE MANNER. THESE MKS SAID THEY COULD NOT SUPPORT A RESOLUTION WHICH WAS PROPOSING NON-ACTION, BUT WANTED TO GO FURTHER AND PROPOSE A COUNTERRESOLUTION SUGGESTING SOME POSITIVE STEPS.

6. PRESS COMMENT GENERALLY AGREED WITH THE OPPOSITION'S

COURSE OF ACTION. DAVAR FOR EXAMPLE WROTE ON AUGUST 24 THAT "THE OPPOSITION IS RIGHT IN DISSOCIATING ITSELF FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S PROPOSED JOINT DECLARATION ON THE PLO TODAY. THE REJECTION OF THE PLO IS PART OF THE PLATFORM OF THE BIG PARTIES." A MA'ARIV COMMENTARY SAW THE EFFORT BY BEGIN AS AN ATTEMPT TO GAIN SUPPORT FOR HIS POSITIONS ON THE TERRITORIES: "MR. BEGIN'S AIM IS TO BUILD, LAYER BY LAYER, A SUPRA-COALITIONARY MAJORITY AGAINST WITHDRAWAL FROM JUDEA, SAMARIA, AND THE GAZA STRIP AT ALL COSTS. THE MOST NATURAL THING TO DO WOULD BE TO USE THE PLO ISSUE AS A FIRST LAYER IN THAT STRUCTURE." A MA'ARIV EDITORIAL NOTED THE OPPOSITION PARTIES REJECTION OF TALKS WITH THE PLO, BUT WENT ON TO NOTE THAT THE U.S. SHOULD NOT MISREAD THE KNESSET ACTION: "THE PRIME MINISTER'S ATTEMPT

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TO DEMONSTRATE A NATIONAL CONSENSUS ON THE NEED TO REJECT PLO INCORPORATION IN MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS, HAS FAILED THANKS TO THE OPPOSITION PARTIES. THIS NEED NOT IMPLY THAT THERE IS NO NATIONAL CONSENSUS. IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE PLATFORMS OF BOTH THE ALIGNMENT AND THE DMC."

"...THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION SHOULD NOT DRAW THE WRONG CONCLUSIONS FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY EXERCISE OF THE ISRAELI OPPOSITION; THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL ARE UNITED IN THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE WHITEWASHING OF THE PLO MURDERERS UNDER WHATEVER PRETEXT, EVEN IF THE KNESSET DOES NOT GIVE THIS OPPOSITION FORMAL EXPRESSION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, RESOLUTIONS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 27-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TELAV06405
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770310-1048
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770815/aaaaamfd.tel
Line Count: 148
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 72d7df51-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1457971
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KNESSET TO HOLD A POLITICAL DEBATE ON THE PLO
TAGS: PGOV, IS, PLO, KNESSET
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/72d7df51-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009